

Senate Bill 406

Testimony January 14, 2010

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Presented to the honorable members of the
Committee on Transportation, Tourism, Forestry, and Natural Resources in the Senate.

My profile

46 years of snowmobiling.

2,332 miles already this winter.

11/20 – 12/11 landowner contacts / 536 Stakes & signs.

Put in trails for snowmobilers, not AWSC.

Offices held/positions/projects.

How many in this room know the true impact of this bill.

The ones that contacted the legislators were told to do this by the AWSC without even knowing what this could do to Wis.'s snowmobile program.

America, freedom to choose, I have now chosen not to belong to AWSC, forced to pull memberships, includes extended family, because of this bill (\$10 AWSC fee going to the AWSC lawyers and lobbyists).

Bill has two basic goals:

Create memberships.

More money for the program.

Wrong and possibly illegal to turn over to a private organization.

Belongs within a governmental agency.

Plain and simply a penalty for non-membership.

Present program works.

Not broken, don't try to fix.

Never enough money in program.

Bill has potential to destroy Wis.'s basic snowmobile program.

Present registration program is simple and clean, 2-year registrations, then forget about it.

Bill drops reg. to \$5, has annual trail pass requirement (another decal for your sled) to make up the difference and to maybe add money into the program.

Registration program is the basis of funding for Wis.'s program.

Bill totally changes this.

New basis will be the annual trail pass sales, through the AWSC.

If not a club member (AWSC), \$20 penalty every year for every sled.

AWSC claims every snowmobiler should belong to their organization.

Many/most cannot, will not; their reasons are valid.

But they are not freeloaders.

For every sled presently registered, \$76.06 goes into the program for the 2-year period of registration, via reg/30.00 - gas tax/32.90 - 40% multiplier/13.16.

Like it or not, snowmobilers now have the reputation of being against deer hunters (bus loads to the capitol).

This bill will now add battle lines between club members and non-club members.

Will also draw battle lines between club members and non-member landowners.

There are numerous other issues and areas of concern:

What happens if AWSC goes under, dissolves, or goes bankrupt.

The present accountability as a state program now changes to what.

There is no history for this type of program.

For budgeting purposes, is it likely that there might not be any appropriations for the first year (includes the \$250/mile)? It is simply a budgeting fiasco.

Needs an extremely intense fiscal analysis.

The trail pass scenario has built-in law enforcement unfriendliness.

There would need to be daily updates on the trail pass sales.

Would club treasurers need to be bonded?

Most club members already only pay their dues (no meetings, offices, work).

AWSC should be targeting the inactive club members.

Dealer impact.

What if a judge rules in class-action suit against mandatory membership.

Summer 2003 AWSC survey among club members only:

140/419 did NOT believe mandatory membership was proper.

199/417 did NOT believe mandatory AWSC was proper.

Example:

Club membership \$20/year.

Non-member with five sleds would have to pay \$100 PER YEAR to operate on trails open to the public.

A simple question and solution: Why not go for a registration increase?????



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SENATE BILL 406

Statement from the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs

For nearly four decades, volunteers (particularly AWSC members) have maintained the quality and safety of Wisconsin snowmobile trails. These trails are regarded as some of the best (if not THE best) in the country. Snowmobiling has become one of our state's leading outdoor activities, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars in tourism and retail revenue to state coffers.

During these many years, AWSC members have been paying an average of \$20.00 annually in membership dues in addition to standard registration fees. They have purchased expensive grooming machines, acquired access to properties and volunteered countless hours of their time in order to assure the quality of our trails.

Shortfalls in funding and reimbursement have become regular occurrences, and the financial burden and time commitments placed upon AWSC members have grown immense. Nearly \$2 Million in project requests for the 2009-2010 snowmobile season were denied due to a shortfall in available funds, while the number of volunteers maintaining our trails is shrinking.

Several states have addressed these growing problems by instituting their own versions of a two-tiered registration/pass program, successfully increasing funding for snowmobiling and increasing membership in organizations that foster trail maintenance, quality and safety. Senate Bill 406 establishes a two-tiered program in Wisconsin, and takes additional steps to fund increased law enforcement presence on our trails and other safety-enhancing measures.

Registration fees in our state have not increased in over 10 years. Even though costs have gone up significantly over that period, each year the quality of our trails has remained intact due to the efforts of volunteers who often pay out-of-pocket to keep our system in top condition.

Combining annual registration and trail pass fees, snowmobilers in other states typically pay more than Wisconsin operators even though our state has many more miles of trails to maintain and supervise. Through a two-tiered program, Wisconsin can remain a tourism draw, infuse much-needed revenue into the Snowmobile Program and increase membership in clubs which for decades have been carrying more than their fair share of the workload with respect to maintaining Wisconsin's snowmobile trails.

Under this program, we are not forcing snowmobilers to join clubs. We are asking the Legislature to raise the cost of resident trail fees for every resident snowmobiler. The exception is that if an individual already contributes \$20.00 annually to a not-for-profit AWSC member club, the cost of that club membership will act as a credit toward the purchase of a resident trail pass. Again, similar programs in other states have proven to be extremely successful in raising capital and increasing active membership numbers.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 406.

40 Years – 1969-2009
United We Trail – Divided We Fail

SENATE BILL 406 FEATURES

1. Makes registration a one-time event unless a transfer occurs.
2. Requires the use of an annual trail use sticker to ride on snowmobile trails.
3. Establishes a two-tiered trail use sticker fee - \$34.25 and \$14.25 for AWSC member effective July 1, 2010. Owners with valid registrations for 2010-2011 receive a \$15.00 credit for their 2010-2011 trail use sticker. Owners whose snowmobile registration expires on June 30, 2010 will not have to renew their registration and instead only will need to acquire an annual trail use sticker.
4. Authorizes AWSC as the vendor for resident snowmobile club trail user stickers and that AWSC will be able to recoup its administrative costs.

NOTE: Trail use stickers would continue to be available to non-AWSC members through DNR and associated vendors.
5. Trail stickers become the basis for appropriations, rather than registrations.
6. Allocates the entire non-resident trail fee to the Supplemental Account.
7. Makes permanent the nighttime 55 mph speed limit.
8. For fiscal years 2010-2011 and for the 2 fiscal years thereafter, appropriates:
 - \$150,000 for state law enforcement. Actual appropriation is roughly \$25,000 as 2009-2010 state budget includes nearly \$125,000 for law enforcement
 - \$40,000 for alcohol education and alternative transportation programs
 - \$30,000 for state trails.
9. Creates an absolute sobriety standard for operators under the legal drinking age.
10. Doubles the penalties for intoxicated snowmobilers if a minor under the age of 16 is riding on the snowmobile.